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Typography by Seán Jennett

EDITORIAL

What remains of the reading public, after the inflation has taken the heart out of it, has been having a glorious time with the classics, unobtainable during the war, but now pouring from publishers in a growing stream of cheap and attractively produced volumes. The past is upon us and, ostrich-like, we are rolling our heads in its opiate sand. There are signs, though, that poetry, which thrives on the changing world of magazines, is also on the move. *The Changing World*, in fact, is the title of a new quarterly coming from the Harvill Press, which has just published *The Dedicated Life in Poetry* by Patrice de la Tour du Pin, a French poet who should be better known in England. And after a long silence, *Poetry* (*London*) has again appeared. During the early years of the war the young poets would have remained silent if *Poetry* (*London*) had not appeared. We hear also that changes have been made in the administration of *The Poetry Review*, which is at the other end of the scale, so much so that the balance had been unwarrantably anchored on the wrong side of 1900 for far too many years. From a new editor who is not unaware that the meaning of the word tradition is a handing on of the word from age to youth we may expect a more dignified and worthy stewardship of the more conservative trends in contemporary writing. Lastly, we welcome a newcomer to the ranks of the isolated but unfailing readers of poetry. *Verse* is a new poetry magazine. Those who wish to edit new magazines are legion, but few reach the stage of a live birth. Without new magazines born of the courage of unknown editors who have the continuance of our poetry at heart, English poetry would perish. Perhaps the last chance of our devilish world lies in poetry. That a new magazine should appear in these latter days of our civilization is perhaps the guarantee of our hope.

The popular conception of the poet in the mind of the public is still the one left to us from the nineteenth century. We think it would interest our readers to know how this day to day world affects the modern poet, and we print on another page a questionnaire drawn up by Mr. Derek Stanford, whose critical work is well known to readers of POETRY QUARTERLY. A selection of answers received before February 28th will be printed in the Spring issue. These will be chosen for their aptness and the light they throw on the question. The only qualification necessary is to consider oneself a poet. To the rage and chagrin of the Philistine, most of us do that.

RUTHVEN TODD

Christmas 1947

For Stephen Spender

It seems that perhaps the last saint
Has gone from our company and died
Among the lonely sands, and only the painted
Image remains, and the hard strident
Crying of the birds echoes in the ears
Which once were tuned to the weird

Call of the prophet. What did he say?
Even the old are tired of their remembering
And senselessly nod their heads. Much graying
Of hair has happened since that December
When it was whispered that the stranger men
Came this arduous way for an urgent portent,

And the comet flared for a long time
So that many followed it and went wrong
For the rainbow's end was not gold or diamonds
But only a child born of a woman wronged
By a village carpenter, a poor simple man
Who knew nothing and was unskilled in the cant

Of the soldiers who obeyed the word
Issued so hastily by the syphilitic king
Who, for no reason, suddenly desired the murder
Of the little children. No one could linger
In a country where such happenings were rife
And even a rich merchant could suddenly be knifed

Unexpectedly. Yes, there were troubled days
And we're all glad that they're over.
Now perhaps the first stones can be laid
And the concrete poured: it's time we covered
These sad bodies in the ruins: heaven knows
It will be many years before we shed the load

We carry here, and finally are able to forget
That the tinsel god was worse than the man
Who openly preached treason, abetted
By a few fishermen and such, a handful
Of poor men dreaming of quick easy cash—
Fools, of course, and easily abashed

By the trained witticisms of the priests.
All the money was, naturally, on our side
For we expended our richness and our feasts
Upon the right people. Why enlighten
The multitude, who would use their learning
To move against us? Why should they turn

Against their benefactors? Now it seems
Probable that we may be suddenly opposed
To those who helped us, who also dreamed
Of killing the god we fed, the one who rose
Like a bubble on the froth we made, for
We forgot the love-apple lay among the thorns.

Charles Baudelaire

Offensive at times or cringing, he made
His mother feel a clumsy fumbling fool
Stunting his genius in her persuasive shade,
So that her restraining actions became cruel,

And she gave back what she assumed she'd got
Of little nastiness and hidden hate, until
He had absorbed her pitiful small lot
And realized he had the choice of words to kill.

Always it was revenge, and casually he knew
Exactly which twists would hurt the most:
In spite of this, his poems came out true
To give the lie to his most scornful boast,

And all his simpleness of motive lay exposed,
Shewing him the opposite of all that he'd supposed.

JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

'Through the dear might of Him who walked the waves'

For the sea, too, has its roads:
Beneath the swell, the restless whelm, her womb,
Flanked by those skeleton stone forests, where
Polyp and holothurian trail their tentacles.
The sea too has its alleys, highways, forums;
And thither throng
The sad, pale population of the drowned,
Riding the slow ground-currents like sleep-walkers:
Slim boys tricked out in shells and weed; old men
Out of long-foundered ships, whose coffers
Gape—a sardonic smile of gold and rubies;
Those who went down with bags of dates and raisins,
Or crates from Jaffa; the solitary airman
Who fell, a black bolt from a sky of fire,
Into the silent sea; the Punic sailor,
Clutching his statues of the Cabiri,
Which once, upon his prow,
Gazed home to Carthage with dull wooden eyes,
And could not save in that last storm off Gades;
And here comes sidling by
A Portuguese lady with long bony hands,
Who sailed to join her bridegroom in Brazil,
In ragged satin (and a barnacle
Grows on her finger like a signet-ring).
Here are the chiefs of Lyonesse, the bellringers
Of Ys, that famous town, and, grave
In their strange figured breastplates, senators
Of lost Atlantis,—
With all that former world which the first Flood
Had borne away, when under God's small stars,
In his great loneliness
Noah weighed his anchor and set forth
On the dark sea. So, drifting past,
All names, known and unknown, she has sucked in:
The poor youth carried down the Dardanelles,
The poet, sunk without trace off Mexico,
And the drowned Lyoidas. . . .

This was the world that once Alcyone saw,
When in her sleep the phantom spread its wings,
And showed her dripping husband's dreary form.
Shelley was once a guest here, and the winds
And waves that carried his quenched ashes from the shore
Mingle them with it yet.
Poe in his dreams beheld the steep black wall
Of the gyrating maelstrom draw him down
And down and down into oblivion;
And Melville never could forget this nation,
But through his turgid water world of thought
Still moved a white and awful shape,
The great sea-monster, the unconquered evil. . . .

The ice-bergs, the blue cows of giantland,
Groaned as they clashed together through the night
And the cold mists, while the god Thor went out
To fish for the sea-serpent. But it lies
Coiled in the crater of a sunk volcano,
Watching with cruel and unwinking pupils
The little fishes, red and blue and yellow,
Go speeding past, with eager teeth to tear
The flesh of some young parricide, sewn in his sack,
And washed some three miles out from Ostia.
And there the mermaids' heartless song
Will madden and distract
The drowned man's slumbers in the deep-sea cave;
And there the Kraken waves its livid arms. . . .

'Oh I would I were a halcyon-bird,
Beating with dark wings over the sea,
Whom the young ones carry when his years are done,
That bird of Spring. . . . ' Carry me to those feet
That tread unharvested Gennessareth's
Whitening wave-tops like the mountain dawn—
Above this monstrous world of squid and skate,
Sea-anemone, echinus and crinoid!
For I would see, outlined against the stars,
The Eternal Man measure with confidence
The treacherous foam-paths like a glassy pavement,
Who with His clear eyes looks down and sees
The sandy bottom and its life of slime—

All those dumb goggle-faces—
Assume the ordering of adoration.
And now his hand (which shall, at the end of Time,
Capture Leviathan, and draw him forth
With bright gold scales glittering in the sun,
And land him gasping on the beach, to feed
Five-thousand of the faithful),
Is stretched above the waves, to pluck
The failing Peter from their cold embrace.

NICHOLAS MOORE

Academic Exercise (with Love)

Never, admitting all the hurts I find
    On heart and mind,
Shall I be reconciled to evil, nor,
Unless the hurt's so great that I'm all sore,
    Give in one jot.
Rather, I'd ask for more and bear the lot.

Each terrible suspicion drives me back.
    Fearing the lack,
Now, of all pleasures that I used to seek,
Always this hesitation makes me weak,
    Each hour, each day,
Jailed by my doubts from going any way.

Until she smiles and talks, and then at last
    Out goes the past;
Yet I'm a prisoner in my prison still,
Returned to all the things that did me evil.
    O heart, O mind,
Forever now you're caught: yet she'll be kind.

JAMES KIRKUP

The Changeling

Here, in the long summer morning, played
the vanished gods.
Beneath the horrid cliff
the ruined sand is dark
still with their dancing.
Here they lay and wrestled, sang
and sprang with the hurdling breakers
in sunny gales that swept the spray
in slow-falling veils from the collapsing
pedestals of cliff, and from the waves'
hanging gardens, whose fountain-tops extinguished
fixed horizons with their leaping, spectral green.

> Here, hand in hand, we ran
> along the singing sands that like a smooth
> stone shone at the sea's retreating touch,
> making a double marvel of those golden games,
> whose alchemy reduced what should have been
> our shadow to a sharp reflection.

But all, now, are gone.
Like any criminal, in secret I have come
to find again that gay perfection that the world
rejects, to leap with them again
the crashing rainbows of the forbidden rocks.
But all, they are all gone.
The sun is low, and long shadows slide
like closing doors across the beaches,
locking in more than ice the wintry sea, whose arches
topple their dark and evening-reddened
crests of cloud like cornices of marble dust
with dry, hollow sounds along the crumpled shore.

> O, what an outcast I have now become
> since those deep summer days, when in my hand
> I held the clew and magic properties of love,
> and in a haunted morning slumbered my mortality away
> upon immortal shoulders! Where,
> where are you now, companions of earth and air?

O will you come
again? Return, O happy wonders,
and do not leave me like a stranger,
darkling! Run from the neighbouring bay
with shouts of greeting and a wreath
of sea-flowers, air and foam. . . . For since I knew
your wisdom, tenderness and grace,
I am a mortal lost among immortal memories,
caught in the war of dreaming and the world,
stranger to both. O let the dove
of my deliverance in this drowning wave be bright,
and give my changed heart freedom from its stranger love!

KENNETH GEE

The Prisoners

Do not consider me beyond the law,
Since there is no justice I can outlaw,
Only laws that I break, with contempt in my heart.

My fellow prisoners bear the wounds of felons,
Though innocent: judged guilty because they would not wear
The distorting lenses of minds that would persuade them
Deceit was not deceit, death was not death,
That words did not mean what they said.
I should not say that they were judged, who were condemned
From that unlucky moment they were born.

They were unlucky, for they were passionate,
And they thought justice and compassion true.
So they were hunted down from house to wilderness,
And they were driven out by little men
To lodge within these stony limits,
To learn the attitudes of torture,
To pass white nights in waiting upon silence,
And to stare and stare at darkness from their leper-windows.
Wherever they went, they knew
Scorn that would break the heart.

Nevertheless the heart will not be stilled,
And beats in the poor vulnerable body still,
As a bird would sing for spring in an autumn tree
And sound a note of life in withering branches,
A bird blinded to seasons and the sky:
For the heart believes its music is possible, is even real,
Although the weary flesh knows otherwise
And the eye sees the hangman standing by the tree.

Do not consider me arrogant though I say
The whipping masters shall be driven underground
And the tyrannous buried under the dead grass.

Do not believe that we will not break free:
When all our stricken and dead go floating out to sea
We prisoners will follow them to sing at their wake,
And leave the masters only a desert at the latter end,
A place of no spring, packed snow, rock on rock,
Where all that is left of life is the heartbreak.

DEREK STANFORD

Dark Festival

For URSULA STUART LAIRD

'Suivons le mirage lointain!'—BAUDELAIRE

Nocturne of waters,
effigy of silence,
anthem of full blue stillness
under the stars . . .
The river seems
some great bride of the church
laid out in death
with candles burning round her;
a martyr with the crucifix of lamplight
like golden scars inscribed upon her breast.

Here, through this midnight
plenitude of peace,
the late-heard music once again rehearsed
within my ear—
time-sealed and echoing—
an all-but-empty towpath
leads me home.

Deep quiet;
but from the darkness
whispers come:
murmurs of those
who on the river-bank
lie wrapped in lust's
abstracted close cocoon,
heedless of all
save the blind body's need.

In vain the music plucks their stirring shroud.

Now from the weir-bridge
red as a blood-shot eye
a warning lantern glimmers
and raucous mirth—
belched up from beery lungs—
befugs the sky,
until the still night sickens
with fuming words.

Once more the lingering music stands denied.

Repelled, with lowered sight
and thoughts indrawn,
as one avoiding
some mean funeral,
I follow in this stumbling riot's wake,
the starlight like a birch-tree smeared with pitch.

At last
the bawling revellers are gone.
The quiet steals back,
as dew across a lawn
expunges some late snail's beslivered track.
The air's pure breath distils a wave of peace.

But who is this
meets my uplifted gaze:
pale figure seated on a towpath bench,
half haloed by the lamp's dissembling twilight,
half hidden by the mist's white ambuscade?
I cannot say.
The head is turned away
towards an old brick wall's
dark set regard
which drowns the features
in its moat of shade.
A girl in blue
with furry corn-gold hair
appears—then no one,
only space, is there.

Illusion, vision:
name them as one will—
life cannot long
alone endure the real,
and dreams break through
or else the heart must die.

Peace, then, this night,
to all who now pursue
beneath our common sky of suffering
that anodyne peculiar to their pain—
strange Sesames of fancy: pure, obscene,
according to their usage; divers means
procuring brief escape from one sure curse.

Peace to the drunkard in his reeling prison,
the lecher cold before his blood's green fire,
the lover lost in his impossible heaven,
the artist swung between desire and fame.

The music and the night are reunited.

Peace to all those
who know escape
is vain.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

From the Notebook of a European Tramp

I

To live on earth and bear it, often we must
return to Eden where we were animals;
what through refined duplicity we lost
we must regain, even against our wills,
since pride prescribes that we should feel distaste
for all that lies beyond the spectral walls
built to conceal the land we long for most,
the only Garden boundless as our souls.

Some find it in the fields and some in love,
some in the contrapunctal tapestries
which Bach and other worldly masters wove
so skilfully that only silence is
less questionably perfect, more alive;
but Eden is reserved for holidays,
and, once acclimatised, we must quickly leave,
enriched by a faint photograph of bliss.

II

Still in Vienna longing upholsters
the past, old bones are wrapped up in our rags;
too late. These palaces are forever dead;
though the façades are patched, voluptuous
foliage of stucco restored to the porches,
gold splashed lavishly over lustres and walls,
never shall breath or sound stir them again.
What should the mirrors reflect? the hungry
faces of tourists thrust in and withdrawn
or the officials so clumsily caged
in paper glory dry as the beams beneath,
their narrow power like collars, starched, stifling them?—
and though its twisted saints seem nearer to us,
tuned to our pitch of pain, St. Stephen's rises
slender and straight to a different heaven.

No sudden blast lifted its roof; but long
before the bombs the buttresses relaxed.
A rounder pomp, the too inflated cherubs came,
unhoused the Gothic God and died of gout;
both now are stone forever, motionless.

III

In the moon of my dying the earth shall yet
be mirrored and only sorrow fade out;—
not mine—for I have none that was mine—
but pity, the most terrible of griefs.
Self alone is nothing and cannot feel;
it is the root that hurts when the severed
rattle like wind-swept leaves in the streets,
and the remoteness of another's pain.
These then I need not see again: the tramps
whom the bright ecstasy of choice has never filled,
the driven and the lost; the tourists too,
burdened with bags, with guilt and garrulous guides—
and Eden still not quite found;—
in the moon
of my dying these too shall be at rest;
and, as in drunkenness, all shall be drawn
into my joy, dipped in the silver of peace.

IV

Wherever I may die
dig in what's left and let it lie:
I never cared for fame,
the brief survival of a name.
These pages too you may
leave where they'll share in my decay
or you may take them out
and let the wind blow them about.
Though books and gravestones are
sublime while perpendicular,
soon they are as prostrate
as that which they commemorate,
and I would rather pass
into the nameless green of grass,
where still, alive or dead,
tramp-like, I shall not rise but spread.

IGNACE M. INGIANNI

No Yearning Touches

Frail bone craving the moon-petal,
white gesture taking the pulse
in the corridors of stars.

The landscape curls over the hills,
stone embrace and mountain sky
caught in an instant of yearning.

The song inherits the legend's note,
in the incredible hour when now is forever.

Shadow lights the way in the interlude
of blood, where falls no level sound.

BERNARD BERGONZI

Warning

Take care O freely flying bright
young bird, poised unsuspectingly between
the silent open jaws of that blind

lion, the Future. The carefree wing-
beats of your blissful present
raise the fetid subtly corrupting wind

of Actuality, that rots
the hopeful simple thought
and blinds upon the sneering realistic rocks,

that are the teeth of time, your light-
filled wonder-seeing eyes.
Take care O brave young bird, do not disturb
the lion.

JOHN BAYLISS

Stoke d'Abernon Manor

The Summer light is gone and these green lawns
with grey stone urns and darkening heads of roses
now heed no more the burning of the sun.

Curved in the wavering air the river loses
all its harsh outline. Covered in white mist
it welcomes lovers with soft obsequies.

Here in this graveyard love lies altering
only by season under the changing grass.
No spirits range the air with their sad longing.

But here is certainty and quietness,
graveyard and garden, old, unquestioning,
nor do the gold hands move on the clock's face.

LIONEL MONTEITH

Strange Winds

For M. E. M.

I have seen sorrow and the wind
moving across your lips.
Seen shapes of monstrous sea-birds
poised upon the northward drift.
Aloft there, menacing the gift
of love; move polewards to eternal cold.
    And the world suddenly warm,
calm, breaking its bread and fishes
in your soft hand.
Then I was a child in the green field,
feeding with the five thousand.

WILLIAM PORRITT

When We are Least Ourselves

Disconsolate in times alone and lonely
We glimpse the spilling light from hooded lamps
Dwell on touched damask and hair at evenings,
And become for these insights the less ourselves.

Like women when a perfume hovers
Who walk within the floral odour
Becoming a part of the not themselves,
And the scent a part of not itself.

And from that often being otherness,
Someone playing on strings and out of sight
Or unsuspecting they who kiss in lamplight
Grow huge from the strain at the hub they inhabit.

For everyone is wished on sometime—
Who have a need for dancing on especial days
When cripples with their clubs tap out a longing;
Or women indifferent in furs when beggars watch.

Balloons express it with their floating,
How, skin to skin in oval upwardness
Tints of one extend into the other,
But never the whole and inward airiness.

Then, O, that we might be like glass!—
Strangely so strong yet self-unconcealing,
Ways-through for gestures, lamp-glow, storm-gloom,
But in ourselves as fierce and taut as crystal.

F. WILSON

Lust

Then her immobile robot lover
opened and shut his steel glove over her soul,
being invulnerable and her eyes' modesty
fluttering dovewise, wing over downcast wing
fled his caresses, into her self's dark forest.

How can I mitigate, how admit her?
I whom the leaves cried out for like frightened children,
I within the forest now, scrutinizing,
through the embittered branches, through the tallness
of trees' indecipherable gloom, I searching
for the high pity of timorous white wings.

But now his cold metallic clasp
sinks in her arm, and the flesh discloses
his grip's imprint, blue and swollen rings.

Seascape

Ariadne in sadness, who can tell what lover
the grey waves picture? Her eyes haunt the waves like gulls,
snatching his image, her food, from the sinuous waters.
Here he comes, out of a picture, shouldering back the coldish waves,
only the great rollers boom down from stormy Chios
to drown his face, ribbons of his face disperse,
flutter down to the deep like seaweed and the girl's eyes
are shivered beneath the iron tongue of the tide.

And the air, a tumult of gulls, is tight with pity;
as air is tight in the incredulous seconds
after an explosion, or that smouldering instant of utter remorse
when a bomb has dropped, and before the yellow fumes fade into
nothing
and the ticking particles of debris disperse.

PAUL SCOTT

Song for Kafka

If you were a seeing eye beneath the lid that closed,
a lock, a latch that cannot be privy to souls,
to savings; if you, eye, were Kafka when sleep
was a soft pillow, a pool—sky, star and lid
reversed and safe from a fool's groping;
then you are a steep stair, a vision
to climb, to pause stumbling; you and the finger
raised to ask, to hear, resume the quest
for star, graft your desire to song, to words
and leap, unhesitating.

All of you here within, a bud, a seed
stood trial for the sun, her sinning:
nowhere the guilt may lie but now
on lip, on heart, on word
and find no road leading beyond this; nor
there, if being, a hand or other eye
to fuse, to fire in the womb of yours the dream
that makes a rock of your love, your heart,
until you tread again to the iron tower
and wait, listening.

IRIS BIRTWISTLE

Burnt Boat and Bridge

Always at low tide the question of burnt
Boat and bridge, scarred monuments that fail to
Span discarded days lying like old clothes

In a dark cupboard. Stones kicked down the mind's
Alley turn dry leaves towards butterfly
Moments that droop at night, and stolid bees

Storing honey for dark seasons' spending,
Darting through weeds to glory in scent and
Extravagant curve of flowers riding

The garden like sailing ships. Defiant
Tradition calls for glass and rum keg, sets
Appropriate tombstones over the past

Then lurches towards Autumn's unrepressed
Wilderness where fog and bramble drag dank
Shadows over old wounds on a sun-dial's

Face and nostalgia plucks the wild air like
A prophetic bird or summer's last rose
Climbing the window of an empty house.

DOMHNALL O'CONAILL

Old Men's Eyes

In crowded streets,
In tenement doorways,
On benches in the park in winter:
I have seen old men's eyes
Dreaming of other seasons
When their love could gain an answer.

Your eyes and mine, darling,
Will see winter's black evenings:
Our love, now ripe, may fall and die.
Our eyes too, as old men's,
May close to the future
And lean to the past,
Hating to say farewell.

So love, hold your heart close to mine,
Let our eyes grow aged together.
Let us never,
Never have to turn to younger eyes
To keep alive our love,
When time has smoothed our passion into peace.

ERNEST M. FROST

The Other Tongue

These were the kindnesses we never owned
but played around us like strange languages:

how the moon clothed us in a coat of mail
and set us by the dog-shaped oak to pray,

and how that naked voluntary love
caved in the roofs of houses, while we lay

under the sky's locked sea, receiving then
the icy, islanded Sibelius.

The frozen swan in aspects of a prince
nailed to a tree of stars could let us in—

could let us in and lock the verbal door
and chant those languages like mice in corn

and move the mirror till the shadowed floor
rose up a prisoner with the moon its ball

the ball of worlds, whose kindnesses could cure
the other tongue of custom were it free to fall.

PAUL ELUARD

Woman in Love

She stands upright on my eyelids
And her hair is mixed with mine,
She has the shape of my hands,
She has the colour of my eyes,
She is devoured by my shadow
Like a stone on the sky.

She has eyes that are always open
And do not let me sleep.
Her dreams in broad daylight
Make the suns evaporate
Make me laugh, and laugh and cry,
And talk of nothing and know not why.

(Translated from the French by JAMES KIRKUP)

PIERRE JEAN JOUVE

Catacombs

Dim sepulchre! dark lure of drunken sweetness,
Check not my footsteps in your farthest depths.
Blest earth of God, complete my fearful pallor,
And grant a guiding eye within these vaults.

Now, freed at last, by means of night's extreme,
Once more my memory and I return:

Lost are the dwelling-places of all men—
Pastures and shrubs, white walls through gratings seen,
And chestnut-trees afloat in lakes of jade;
Lost, too, the blue God-painted pillars of heaven,
And, likewise lost, the clouds' soft consummation.

Bloodstained and hidden in the earth's repose,
My name has long since ceased to be my name;
My footsteps and their pathways are no more.
Within this airless tomb I stand alone,
Deprived of being, and see, where, bursting, dawns
Through gloom and glory, a lamb of blackest flame.

(Translated from the French by DEREK STANFORD)

W. S. GRAHAM: THE TECHNIQUE OF MORALITY

The responsibility of a poet *to* as well as *for* his poem implies a radical shift in emphasis from the kind of responsibility elected so often in recent times by the poets themselves. The poets of the thirties saw their responsibility as being towards History (always capitalized), society, current events, Marx or Freud. The supposed romantic revolution of the forties placed the poet's responsibility at his own doorstep. The poet was to be responsible to the individual and thus, microcosmically, to encompass a greater responsibility towards society, which, in its organized forms, was abjured. All these forms of responsibility are, in a quite literal sense, *outside*, even physically outside the poem. When in W. S. Graham's *Notes on a Poetry of Release*,* one finds a poet still in his twenties defining his responsibilities strictly in terms of his obligation to make words work in a certain way, one recognizes how ancillary to the true craftsman's affection for his materials are other attitudes. Graham, whatever other habit he shares with the younger generation of romantics, or however much he continues what is already likely to be thought of as the 'tradition' of Dylan Thomas, is entirely single in his primary dedication—to the poem:

> '. . . A poem is made of words. It is words in a certain order, good or bad, by the significance of its addition to life, and not to be judged by any other value put upon it by imagining how or why or by what kind of man it was made. It is easy to strive to make a poem out of the wrong material like a table out of water. It is easy to mistake a poem for a different thing with a different function and to be sad when it does not put out what it is not. . . . The meaning of a word in a poem is never more than its position. The meaning of a poem is itself not less a comma. But then to each man it comes into new life. It is brought to life by the reader and takes part in the reader's change.'

Such an intention leads us to expect a concern with technique in Graham's poetry. But to think that his complex, consciously constructed poems are merely technical in their end, is to falsify what a concern with words means. A poem by definition should rule out such a possibility. To see that the poet is concerned with words in a certain order, and that this order has a meaning at least

* *Notes on a Poetry of Release* (*Poetry Scotland* No. 3, Maclellan, Glasgow). (*Quarterly Review of Literature*, Vol. III, No. 4, Autumn, 1947, New Haven, Conn., U.S.A.)

for the duration of the poem, is to allow the poet his richest possible function and the poem its best intensity of meaning.

In the light of Kenneth Burke's suggestive metaphor on the indivisibility of means and ends in poetry—'the container and the thing contained'—how does Graham use words to explore the imagination? His first book of poems, *The Seven Journeys*,* provides useful signposts to his direction. The seven journeys are, in fact, seven longish narrative poems each clustering around a nexus of experience such as sex, intellect, the marvellous, love, etc. The fiction of an 'I'-narrator (announced in a prologue poem, 'The Narrator') serves as a hub or spindle upon which to centre the various data of these explorations or journeys. Though the poems as formal units suffer from a lack of sustained intellectual direction, individual lines and passages almost compensate for this. In all of the journeys a reliance is placed quite characteristically, as we shall see when examining Graham's later verse, on the poet's inward resources for seeing a 'reality' and for creation:

> *Yet my eye webs the word. History in a bowl*
> *Spreads out a firth for ptarmigan and the pedlar's moth*
> *And anarchy within a cage.*

It is the exact vision of a dynamic of order or of chaos within even the narrowest physical confines of animal, place, or thing which the poet-narrator, in a final wish, hopes

> *Is yet enchanted into form.*

The reader's participation in the making of a poem is invited, but, at the same time, primacy is given to the supreme fiction of the poet's autonomy as maker:

> *I build an iliad in a limpet dome.*
> . . . . . .
> *My craft with leopards at the lonely bow*
> *Swings a long shadowed jib of proud alarms*
> *And wakens villages and larks in scalloped cells.*

It is, in a sense, quite crucial to the whole body of Graham's work that he has a rich stock of imagery of small, usually organic things (here—limpets, cells, etc.) which serve to reduce to a minute scale the dimensions of the outside, geographic universe, so that we see the whole complicated life of the microcosm as a sign of the larger whole in which it manages to sustain its own inner wholeness. This

* *The Seven Journeys* (Maclellan, Glasgow, 6s.).

curious way of sorting 'History in a bowl' may, physiologically traced, derive from Graham's early training as a precision engineer and the concern for small exactitudes and the readings of the micrometer involved in it. This recurrent closing down of the field of vision, as it were, may be a symbol of the narrowing of the margins of the self, and the assertion of the superior integrity of the individual universe in an environment which threatens to engulf, or, at least, invade it. Other instances in *The Seven Journeys* of this closing in of the focus of observation are found in similes such as:

Like down a polar spiral in a berg of bone,

or in the fine melancholy of a passage like:

Somewhere in distilled harmonies a tumult spins,
One for each human constellation in a skull,
And blows a world of faculties in a watched bubble
And ribs my magpie comet in a cage without grievance.

These lines, incidentally, are instructive to examine for the way in which the imagery breeds the philosophical generalization of the aloneness of 'each human constellation' rather than, as so often happens in 'philosophical' poetry, the generalization fumbling about for appropriate imagery.

When we arrive at a consideration of Graham's next volume, *Cage Without Grievance*,* we find a consolidation of linguistic practice which makes for greater ease and simplicity in the movement of the rhetoric. This, of course, should not suggest that the poetry is more simple. The formal influences at work here continue to be Dylan Thomas in the syntax and in the rich sexual imagery of 'To girls at the turn of night love goes on knocking', with the newer presences of Rimbaud in poems like 'There was when Morning Fell', and in the fine lyric, 'O Gentle Queen of the Afternoon', and of Blake in a deliberately archaic pantheism which is suggested in the projection of a sexual dualism into all the aspects of the physical universe. Hopkins is obviously operative in such packed lines as:

Cruel to myself my nicknamed heart, named Rock
Dams here now next and every time Time's burn

or in the alliterative pressure of:

No fonder father have you in tear and fire,

as well as in compound anglo-saxon words like 'wound-well',

* *Cage Without Grievance* (Parton Press, 5s.), 1942.

self-nailed, etc. The poem in which this charged rhetoric occurs, Endure no Conflict. Crosses are Keepsakes', like Hopkins' poems, is about morality, but it is not a congenial to Hopkins' Catholicism. The tone in which this morality is enunciated is that of a hard, Northern didacticism. (There is a consistent use of Scots words and Scots place-names.) But Graham's morality is a morality of the 'anti-moral' in the sense that the poet is questioning a morality of self-sacrifice, of human saviourdom. 'Endure no Conflict. Crosses are Keepsakes', is the text. While this poem is not entirely successful, it is important in that it attempts to pose the antinomies of the conflict.

A poem which does succeed in defining the outlines of this paradox, and which is, perhaps, the most memorable poem of *Cage Without Grievance*, is 'I no more Real than Evil in my Roof'. Using the convention of the poet as spectator looking out from his house at children playing, the poem attempts to arrive at what is *proper* to the self as morality, without a sacrifice of the self's integrity. The diction is simple, uncluttered, and achieves a serene dignity through a careful usage of the homely physical objects and dimensions of a room: 'chair', 'table', 'window', 'lintel', 'floor', etc. The room and its physical objects must be taken to mean the enclosure or lineaments of the self, which, in the Blakeian sense, define it. The world outside the self (the children playing outside 'the window's needle eye') is viewed with tenderness but is kept, quite properly, outside.

I, no more real than my enclosure
Devise my eye to irrigate my love

The mind is seen as the diviner of the emotions and reaches a recognition, if only temporarily, of a pluralistic morality:

The flagstone under sky is canopy
For other air where other thunder falls.

Graham's special tone in *Cage Without Grievances* is that of a profoundly serious search for a morality, but one which is sought for in poetic and not in philosophic terms. The notion that a lyric poet, which Graham first of all is, does not deal with 'ideas' must not be tolerated; the lyric can be an exploration of values and ideas, but it evokes them by means of a texture quite different from that of a 'philosophic' poem. For example, one of Graham's most accessible lyrics in this collection is the gracefully paced:

Here next the chair I was when winter went
Down looking for distant bothies of love
And met birch-bright and by the blows of March
The farm bolder under and the din of burning.

On the primary level this is a nostalgic and slightly melancholy exposition of the search for love as a creative act, which, in the end, must give way to 'the bitter hour so visible to death' and, on a more 'philosophic' one it is an exploration concerning the relation of past to present. This poem, it should be mentioned, uses a symbolism sprung from Celtic folk-lore and an exact observation of Scots terrain to infuse the diction with a rugged authenticity.

2nd Poems published in 1945,* reveals a gradual sloughing off of the useful influences of Hopkins and Dylan Thomas along with a quickened interest in the linguistic pioneer work of Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. The latter trend is suggested in the telescoped nouns of a line like

Each watchlight fisherman-tied in the cattlesteep dusk

or the dense onomatopœia of

. . . She and but one
Surely when night fell for a long time lay,

and in the total verbal pattern of the interesting 'The Halftelling Sight'. But along with these new obligations, there is a conscious attempt to rely more fully on thc Celtic and Anglo-Saxon components of English. The massive elegiac tread of 'Continual Sea and Air', about tumbled airmen, contrives an effect at once of simplicity and richness in this usage.

Another poem notable for its hard simplicity of language and its remarkably economic handling of a complex 'idea' and which, like 'Continual Sea and Air', concludes in a profoundly religious mood is 'The Serving Inhabiters'. This poem explores the dangerous labyrinth of the 'contraries' of the self ('Wonder struck one inhabitant of me') and pleads for the best inhabitant to speak well. Involved in this conception of personality is the equal paradox of environment and individual seen not in polar relationship but as a series of degree. Where does the environment stop? The answer is suggested in the clear, almost traditional, imagery of the central stanza (the poem is composed of a sustained metaphor where the individual is a house containing all the world's possible inhabitants):

* *2nd Poems* (Editions Poetry, London, 5s.) 1945.

I am my womb or man for woman fetchea
By strict ambition. I my shepherd am
And feed a million harmonies.
The roar they fall in is my home
And all the serving distance is my room.

Philosophically, then, the poems of this collection suggest a considerable intellectual maturation. It is instructive to compare, for example, 'Next My Spade's Going', a poem concerned with Graham's early preoccupation with the mystery of relative dimensions and not merely physical ones ('Silence that makes each grain spin thunder'), with some of the earlier poems on this theme. Again, in the finely unsentimental but optimistic poem significantly titled 'A Letter More Likely to Myself', Graham considers the question of 'reality' and what is the 'world'. He affirms, after the deep humility of the opening lines, the joyful although not exclusive reality of whatever inner universe is constructed by the individual:

. . . I am within to outside
Held forward and subjected
To its most violent wing and last grand childhood.

The essentially joyous temper of Graham's moral sensibility comes through with greatest clarity and beauty in the best of *2nd Poems*, 'Many Without Elegy', a lament for 'the washed-away dead' which, in the end, turns into an indignant rejection of death-in-life:

Here as the morning moves my eyes achieve
Further through elegy. There is the dolphin
Reined with searopes stitching a heart
To swim through blight. No I'll inherit
No keening in my mountainhead or sea
Nor fret for few who die before I do.

This judgment, however, does not exclude a tender consideration of the dead:

Gone to no end but each man's own.
So far they are, creation's whole memory
How never fear their death or day.

For, in perhaps the best lines up to this time which Graham had written, the poet acknowledges the power of the dead proper to their status:

Many out of the shades project a heart
Famous for love and only what they are
To each self's landmark marked among

The dumb scenery of weeping.
I come in sight and duty of these
For food and fuel of a talking blaze.

In considering Graham's recent verse published in various periodicals, I can think of no twentieth century poet who has utilized the resources of the sea as richly as he. It is important to stress that Graham is not a 'sea poet', and that the sea imagery is never used at merely an allusive literary level. The imagery is successful precisely because its vast range of ambiguities of connotation are grounded in realistic observation. Graham's youth on the west coast of Scotland and his recent years on the Cornish coast have yielded him a large fund of information about the sea, its own life and its man-made life. In a poem like 'Men Sign the Sea' all the aspects of this experience are fused by Graham's increasing technical skill into a tremendous cry of pity, terror and acceptance. In the first stanza:

Men sign the sea.
One warbreath more sucked round the roaring veins
Keeping the heart in ark then down loud mountains
After his cry.

The experience of drowning evoked by the powerful second line composed of heavily accented, predominantly anglo-saxon words supports the desperation implied by the made word 'warbreath'. This is balanced by the hopeless echo of 'more' to 'One' and is focused and dramatized by the onomatopoeic qualities of 'sucked', which, coming after the cæsura, moves the line along to its terrible end 'the roaring veins'. 'Sucked' connotes both the actual suction of the drowning man's breath in his 'roaring' (because under the pressure of the sea) veins while, at the same time, it implies the irresistible suction of the sea on the fragile body. 'Roaring' is frightening for a similar dual function: the veins 'roar' invaded by the pressure of the sea; but the 'roaring' is a dreadful and irrevocable announcement of the drowned body diving through the noise of the sea.

In the next stanza there is a subtle shifting of attention. The movement of the poem itself becomes a dramatic agent in the poem. The syntax is skilfully geared to this end in the second line:

This that the sea
Moves through moves over sea-tongued the whole waters
Woven over their breath.

The third stanza, which I cannot quote in its entirety, is a good illustration of the realistic documentation which underlies all of Graham's imagery. Here it works as a cataloguing of wreck: the 'cannoning sea', 'cast rigged among galloping iron vesselwork', 'snapped wirerope', 'spitting oil', 'steam screamed out jets', 'foam-floored house'. 'The filling limpet shell's slow gyre round the drowned', ending this inventory of violence serves both to accentuate what has gone before by its peacefulness and to make a benedictory comment in the proper terms of the sea. The last stanza, paralleling the first in form, and echoing its music, generalizes the meaning of the violence for art. The poem is a made violence which parallels the energy of the sea:

Men sign the sea
Maintained on error, bright emerald over the drowned.
This that the sea moves through drives through the land
Twin to their cry.

The impressive series 'Three Poems of Drowning' grows out of the same nexus of experience as 'Men Sign the Sea' and 'Night's Fall Unlocks the Dirge of the Sea'. The three poems of drowning are like the other sea poems in their exact realistic observation. In II we get 'The seafared pulses roar' and 'His settling hair swims longer round his eyes', and in III, 'Screaming bundles of foam', and powerfully descriptive adjectives of the water's action, 'sea-gentled' and 'sea's raging bridges'. All three poems heighten suspense through the syntactic device of piling up adverbs, or adjectives and participles used adverbially as in 'done down to nothing but locked into under', or 'his all grief well over'. While all of the sea poems have a religious feeling in II and III of the Poems of Browning, there is a specific identification of the imagery with Biblical references. In I, for example, the poet speaking to the drowned workman in his house of water, says:

So emerald-rigged, your gardens hang their Babylons.

The inversion of the hanging gardens of Babylon to 'your gardens hang their Babylons' is a finely evocative description of the strange and confused beauty of the sea's foliage to the new inhabitant. In II the whole first stanza is a developed metaphor in which the drowned man's 'sea-martyrdom' is compared with Christ's crucifixion, and the 'soldier-sea' can be equated with the centurions who bore Christ to his death.

Of these poems, III is the most interesting philosophically. It reaffirms in different terms Graham's insistence on the human

wrongness of lament for what is inexorably gone like 'the smiling lifestories' of the drowned. The poem's centre is the comparison of physical death by drowning with spiritual salvation as a kind of drowning of the past self. The strong last verse dramatizes the paradox with poignance:

Now in these seas, my task of the foam-holy voyages
Charted in a bead of blood, I work. I answer
Across the dark sea's raging bridges of exchange
Proclaiming my own fought drowning, as loud laid under.
All arriving seas drift me, at each heartbreak, home.

The exchanging sea is like a bridge between two aspects of the self, the most recent self which drowns in the arrival of the new. That is, the self as a movement towards perfection moves towards another death. The whole is drifted 'at each heartbreak, home'.

Perhaps the most adventurous and at the same time most thoroughly successful of Graham's recently published poems is 'For the Inmost Lost', which continues the examination of the paradox of the self as saviour. The poem is best quoted in its entirety for useful analysis:

I

For the inmost lost neither angel or beguiled evangel,
Or forgiveness catherined ever on the high starry wheel,
Or crossed rowan, those idiot herbs and ointments of
Adam's healer who talks my crowds from under my roof.
But better waked into the intricate busy garment
With all own heaven's briars burning the innocent
Heart's holy followers as they rise differently mine.
I'm better brought home to school in the ropes of my own
Merrymaking christendom giant to outside crucifixion.

II

All inmost over the intricate crusade further
Unwound through burnished wilderness and the hour
Of death laid whitening, I find the whole delta's bread
Brought bound into treasury dazzling the crumbsharing word.
And fulfilment's ploughbow promising well the land
Further roams here and sows the flowing imagined
Pastures green sprung in their honeyed years. And lost
As I thread my thieves to wound myself into blessed,
I walk as a lonely energy at large through my host.

While this poem is religious in its attitude towards a moral

problem, and while this religious tone is partially created by the use of religious imagery such as the allusion to St. Catherine martyred on the burning wheel, the crossed rowan as a sign against evil, or the reference to Joseph in Egypt in 'the whole delta's bread/ Brought bound into treasury,' etc., this imagery is not used for any traditional religious scheme. Words and phrases like 'evangel', 'angel', 'Adam's healer', 'christendom', 'honeyed', 'crucifixion', 'Pastures green', all of which have Biblical connotations, are used here to reinforce a private religion of self-knowledge. In the search for the best or 'lost' (?) self one is drawn into this intricate labyrinth of selves for which there is not an outside saviour, herb or ointment, but only its 'own heaven's briars' of difficulty and danger. This exploration of the self is a holy crusade in which the mind, like a storehouse of wheat, provides the sustenance of words to judge it. Accepting then the essential loneliness of such a search 'as I thread my thieves' (as the searching principle wends its way through its enemies or poisons) the possibility of vision discovered is suggested in the finality of the rhetorical last line:

I walk as a lonely energy at large through my host.

The curious journalistic phrase 'at large', used so often for a lunatic at large or an animal at large, supports the melancholy of 'lonely' and the anonymity of a force like 'energy'. Anything 'at large' evokes a great sense of loss, loneliness, and sympathy for the thing of being so unanchored. The poem as a whole is the best exposition up to this time of the concern for a fresh morality which manifested itself, as I have indicated, from the very first in Graham's work. It expresses Graham's vision of 'self' as a self packed with all the world's possibilities for differences in individuals, the self as a unique collection of selves, but also a collection of uniques.

VIVIENNE KOCH

FIRST THOUGHTS ON PATRICE DE LA TOUR DU PIN

Perhaps the most paradoxical mind in the contemporary French poetic scene belongs to Patrice de la Tour du Pin; a figure, I believe, almost unknown in this country. Some twenty years younger than his friend Supervielle (who was born in 1884), the poet, in so far as poetry permits, is regarded in France as a literary best-seller; the equivalent there, say, of Stephen Spender. As I have seen in English publications no article of any

kind whatsoever upon him, I am writing this brief and sketchy introduction to make known his work to the reader over here.

In short, the paradox spoken of consists in the fact that while his poetry is, like Valéry's, classical in form its mood and content are strongly romantic. Sharing with the author of 'La jeune Parque' a preference for regular structures in verse, Patrice de la Tour du Pin possesses nothing of the rational systematic mind of Valéry. So, in our own scientific era, with its rational and pseudo-rational values, he registers the failing pulse-beat of imagination in social and individual life. Among the many other diseases of the time, he recognizes a malnutrition of the sense of mystery, and thinks that it points to the near-exhaustion of creative communal thought:

> *All the countries wherein legend abides no more*
> *shall be condemned to perish in the cold.*

This want the poet sets out to remedy; aware that the mass-minded resistance of a mass-production society makes any attempt to redress the balance in favour of more imaginative living on a social scale impossible. He realizes, then, that his contribution must be made in merely individual terms. All that he can do is to write his poems, which only some ten in ten thousand may read, and only one in that ten understand.

So—to use a phrase from his own verse—we get a poetry of 'inner tragedy', which records in its somewhat oblique fashion the hermit conflict of one man's imagination with the adamant inertia of the mass mind. Only the power of imagination (or, as the poet sees it, that which corresponds to imagination in the field of theology—the power of grace) can resurrect, revitalize, and renew the blind and downcast life of man whose 'saturated joys smell of ashes'. Such would appear to be the poet's belief. In the cause, then, of imagination he creates a series of subjective dramas and undefined mythologies. These last must needs remain undefined, in any precise sense of the word, because of the poet's isolation from the low mean-average of contemporary thought, and because the process of definition describes the unknown in terms of the known. Here, however, at the outset, there are no familiar terms—they are all unknown; and Patrice de la Tour du Pin, who in one passage speaks of the dim visibility of the landscapes in his verse as being 'vapoury with legends', describes the poet as a person who comes amongst men 'bearing cryptograms strange'.

Not surprisingly, half in despair as to how the artist can reconcile the demands of expression and communication—how, in other

words, he can equate the manifestation of personal feeling with the requirements of public comprehension—he writes of 'the folly to converse in a dead language' and 'the yearning to achieve the gods that are no more'; and what more ironical and terribly accurate a definition of the nature of poetry in such an age as ours could anyone discover?

I have said that these poems of Tour du Pin present to us a kind of subjective drama, and a word or two is clearly needed to describe the forms which this drama takes. To begin with, this work is not dramatic in any detached or objective sense. The characters and scenes are all internal. The stage is within the poet's brain. At first, these figures whom the poet has created, and whom he christens in a most deceptive way, appear to indulge in dialogue with their author or amongst themselves. This speech, however, we later see to be a kind of soliloquy in disguise, and the characters also we learn are no more than the partial projected egos of the poet. Yet, even so, the uniqueness of their words, the power of individuality about them, the strange disturbing depths of their messages—no more than half-understood by us, perhaps—gives to these fissions of a single mind the semblance of separate independent beings. Comparing, for example, the characters of Tour du Pin with those of Henry Treece in his early poem, 'The Ballad of the Prince,' we find that the latter for all their vagueness and misty Celtic caricature are simple unambiguous beings, totally without those multiplying reverberations which the former possess. This quality is hard to analyse. There is something—though not in so high a degree—of those actions in the plays of Jean Cocteau where an incident suggests beyond its obvious meaning another of a deeper undefined significance—a kind of echo or cuckoo's call of meaning—and something of Shakespeare's *doubles entendres*, about them. Here, for example, are some of the things which one of these characters, Ullin, says:

I am Prince Ullin of the barren heart
fascinating by nights that the self-demon haunts.

You must give up the mist of poems for my rule
shall not admit concessions such as those
that serve but as a mask on impotence supreme.

Upon the rising road of knowledge you shall go
towards the wide-open threshold of death,
the soul high-set, in silence over-flown.

Hasten and let us get ahead of this imposture
of legends, rise from the mountain crest
amid the dazzling glow of corporeal shape.

Who is this Ullin? For what does he stand? Is he the voice of the death-wish in the poet, the sense of intellectual limitation, the crippling thought of thought's finite boundaries, the voice of action, or the fiat of the instincts? The question presents itself, urgent as intricate; nor can I hazard an exclusive reply.

Another character is the woman Laurence, who seems to stand as the embodiment of all feminine desirability and all the ecstatic forces of renewal. Thus, in the poem 'Laurence in the Spring,' we read at one and the same time of 'a dionysic orgy of the flesh' and 'a luminous and vivid storm of Spring/unfurled amid the new-born April morn'. Other characters are the writer Lorenquin, and Foulc and Mosuer, two unsketched-in figures who appear in the poem 'Quest of Joy' as images of their author's dead selves. These last two are discovered in the poem—a 'Pilgrim's Progress' with a tragic end—among certain others found dead and defeated by madness, fever, cold and pride:

> *. . . dead at sea*
> *Mosuer, a hero and so great a friend,*
> *over-taken by the gale; another thunder-stricken*
> *so near the blazing light he was found blind;*
> *others, dead everywhere; Foulc, almost at the goal*
> *whose fierceness was akin to mine of old.*

Feeling, as did the early Romantics, the tacit ostracism which society meets out to all those who beg to differ with it, Tour du Pin seeks refuge in the sanctuary of nature. Nor—as again with his romantic prototypes—is the poet content to find in nature a merely material sanatorium, a rest-home from the worry and fret of his age. As with Hölderlin, Lamartine, and Wordsworth, he conceives of the relation between man and nature in a positive and active two-way fashion. Nature, for him, is something more than a purely physical convalescent agent; and in the natural world, he would probably suggest, we discover a body of correspondences whose subtle reactions upon our being cannot be entirely understood in bio-chemical terms alone. 'What is Nature?' asked the poet Novalis; and, replying to his own question, describes it as 'an encyclopedical, systematic Idea or Plan of our Spirit'; and if Tour du Pin would disagree with this answer on philosophic grounds, the temperament behind it is clearly one with which his own has much in common.

An exile from the industrial ethos of our modern society, the poet does not seek in nature only an undisturbed animal comfort. The Romantic infuses nature with a mind, and the price he pays for

this act of psychological transference is that nature, in turn, will sometimes seem to reflect his own uneasiness and grief. So, in his myth of interior autumn—a season occurring in 'the weather in the soul', as Santayana terms it—Tour du Pin in his poem 'September Children' identifies himself with the falling leaf as Shelley had identified the West Wind with a revivifying cosmic process. But whereas Shelley's poem is a matrix of hope, the mood of 'September Children' is dark: the hope is only a hope for escape, for a freedom from claustrophobic despair, a freedom which is finally to prove self-destructive:

> *And I said: Behold I am a September child*
> *myself, theirs by the heart, the fever, and the mind*
> *and by the burning lust of all my limbs*
> *and that yearning in me to wander through the night*
> *wildly, breaking out from the stuffiness of rooms.*

Out of the frying-pan into the fire. There are no sure monasteries for the mind against the corrupting assaults of the day; and through the deepening gaze of the death-wish art picks out in nature—as everywhere else, those continually present images of doom.

None the less it is chiefly in the company of women and landscapes that the poet feels himself most thoroughly alive. They remain for him two poles of ecstasy whose magnetic contact releases stores of feeling. They provide that essential 'other-ness' which calls into play his own deepest being. Thus he writes of the desire 'to feel throbbing within you the great fever of Nature'; and when in a poem, significantly entitled 'Beyond', he speaks of that wish—

> *To lie buried deep in high grass and thus*
> *asleep to drink in the herbacious flood;*
> *to feel along your sides the feminine caress*
> *of the wind-flowers' low and wavering stems,*

we may be reminded of the way in which Samuel Palmer and a band of his friends engaged in outdoor worship of nature, spending summer nights in the open air and roaming the country in thunderstorms and rain.

Here, too, is another aspect of the paradox embodied in this poetry; for whereas Valéry—in the steps of that Manichee of art, Charles Baudelaire—considered that nature must be subdued by art (whose didactic power was greater than the former's), Tour du Pin returns to the idea of nature as the poet's chosen pedagogue. 'Let go thy book,' he writes,

Let go thy book to search the sky and watch
the green birth of the m[illegible]

Unlike the French Parnassian [illegible]ts who found in nature the data of their art, unworked and lacking a principle of order, Tour du Pin—along with the early Romantics—conceives of nature as the source of a law both physical and metaphysical—a universal measure of harmony. It is this revelation in the work of the poet which causes his work, for all its formal aspect, to challenge the essence of æstheticism—that attitude of art's priority to life—which had undoubtedly been the major factor in most French poetry from Malarmée till to-day. At one moment, even, this new orientation seems to imply the renunciation of art in favour of completely natural living:

We shall give up all poems for to breathe
the only perfect rhythm,

he writes. One thing, at least, of which we can be sure is that this new position contradicts the idea of art pursued not only as a vocation but practised—and often uncreatively—as a distinct daily way of life. It opposes, we may say with regard to the problems of existence, an idea of life to that of still-life. Expressed in another fashion, it prefers a 'nature vivante' to a 'nature morte'.

Concerning the style in which this is conveyed: the movement and framework are classical while the images are undeniably romantic. Certain of these may suggest to the reader the mood of Rembrandtesque crucifixions, while other lines may serve to recall the sombre yet gorgeous palette of Rouault, where bloodstains and gleams of precious jewels peer out from foreboding and lowering shadows in a kind of apocalyptic *chiaroscuro*. Again, by another striking image where a fleet of pleasure-boats or a flock of dead souls (I find it difficult to decide which is meant) are described as appearing 'like phosphorescent Christs in shining light', the reader may be led to think of El Greco with his pale ascending figures and flotillas of angels. And, finally, when the poet writes—

O night of all the nights within the soul,

one can hardly refrain from comparing him with the Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross.

Nor is this parallel purely fortuitous; for Tour du Pin, in the last resort, is a profoundly religious poet who has somehow managed to preserve and express that sense of anxiety and burdened horror felt by the greater unbelieving world. With this he has also contrived

to combine the workings of his pantheistic instinct—his almost physical adoration of nature—and his mystical perception of God.

This unfamiliar symbiosis makes of the poet an isolated figure, a being removed by great mental distance from the bulk of his fellow men. Thus, in a poem 'Lorenquin writes', he expresses, through the lips of an *alter ego*, awareness of the far remoteness of his stand:

> *At the point you have reached upon the road to Joy*
> *where love of God pervades the senses and the soul*
> *you can but lead a life which others will deem mad.*

Now madness, as David Gascoyne once remarked, 'is the logical development of romanticism'; and casting a glance around our world to-day, with the 'sanity' and 'normality' of our atom-bomb planners well considered, we can hardly agree that what goes for madness is, on that account, necessarily bad. All we ask is that this madness shall be creative as it was with Hölderlin, de Nerval, Smart, and Clare; since the mania of such minds as these would seem to light up whole tracts of mental country, fertile behind their seeming desolation. In this unconscious task of pioneering the purely poetic mania of Tour du Pin plays its own unique part.

DEREK STANFORD

(The translation of the French text employed throughout this essay is by Miss C. du Tillet, a personal friend of the poet.)

BETWEEN THE SORCERER AND THE ANGEL

Poems by ERNEST DOWSON (The Unicorn Press, 5s.)

Let us pause a while and talk of Ernest Dowson. He had in himself faculties that make poets great. But he was violent, a fire of feeling, he came to near his own heat and perished before he could prove greatness or failure. In the end his demon relieved him of the need to prove anything. He wrote at a time of first importance to English poetry and, generally, of little expectation as to the changes that were to come. Dowson was representative, without being aware, of the quicksand collapse that was about to begin. Nor was anyone of his kind aware of it, except perhaps Francis Thompson in one poem, difficult to read, and, of course, the priest-poet Hopkins.

Dowson was much too absorbed by his own existence and in love with the magic he could create. Often he clad his poems with liturgic vestments, but as his hands moved over them they became some other thing than holy words: woven dark magic. His hands which he often desired to perform the rituals of benediction were but creative in sorcery; magical but not miraculous. Not serving the angel at his side, Dowson still spoke the words of suffering and joy, he still imitated the signatures of the Cross. He was not of the devil, but burningly, painfully in love with his own kind, heady with the brandy of poetry. And because of that, because he was proud even before the jealous demon, he had to go to the utmost borders of humiliation, out of pride.

For, Lord, I was free of all Thy flowers, but chose the world's sad roses,
And that is why my feet are torn and mine eyes are blind with sweat,
But at Thy terrible judgment-seat, when this my tired life closes,
I am ready to reap whereof I sowed, and pay my righteous debt.

Thus speaks the promethean harlequin. Apart from this there was his lilac dream of France, those gay saints of sorrow, these witty words to be shouted at Oscar Wilde passing by, his seemingly careless wit which belonged to him, was meant for no one but his own amusement, like his loneliness, his splendid wretched solitude.

An unrepenting Robert Greene! What does the sixteenth century look for so late in the day? Whose troubled voice spoke in Dowson? Whose, for that matter, in Gerald Manley Hopkins? Dowson was neither refined nor a gentleman, he should have very much wished to be a barbarian let loose at a wonderful continent-wide kermess. Or else to bury himself in the coarse cloth of a monk, living in intimate anonymity, and bury his face with bitter sweet notions into his barren hands. What actually happened was that he bestowed his unique capricious love upon a Jewish servant girl in the East of London and his body to the earth of a London suburban cemetery.

Of his poems a slim volume survived into this our year 1947. A year covered with wreckage of Babel and boredom, precariously wedged between some end and some beginning.

If Dowson is not much thought of now, it may, curiously enough, have its reason in the rumour that his poems are too easily remembered. They run away under one's eyes before one has time to grasp what one reads. Heinrich Heine, whose verse is lighter than a leaf, and whose reputation as a poet is often used to prove other purposes than those of poetry, has a much more substantial name even in England. Yet there seems to me much they have in common, though

Dowson was less worried about being a poet and Heine had to tread his way back to the domains of fancy from the most exasperating excursions into politics, not unlike his Grenadiers struggling home from the Russian winter.

Some of Dowson's poems are intense enough. The intensity being that of glorification. He glorified his own damnation and also the vague appreciation of his coming resurrection. Until this common miracle would liberate him, for he never imagined *that* to be in his powers, he shared two things with all abandoned people: a desire to rise by means of a black mechanic or to be drugged and elevated by sorcery and magic. Few in any generation dare to risk that deliberately, fewer still renounce the help of the sorcerer and wait for the miracle. Dowson was not given that grace in life. A demon stood watch over his night, a ghost walked past him in blazing midday. He knew the bitterness of knowing without receiving. Here is the depth under his songlike patterns, hell-deep. There are certain types of human beings who seem to call for interference in their lives by agencies which are difficult to trace. Dowson, it seems to me, belonged to those. And he was not strong enough by far to meet these powers. Not without reason did he have a liking for rough places where car-drivers and street-sweepers gathered for fish and chips and tea. There is something horridly reassuring in dull clay, in the boisterous fellowship of family fathers whipping horses or collecting dirt. And another reason: more than all the combined demony or mockery of unattainable love did he know the hardship and brutality received from the rough handling of the angel at his side. He became desperate at times for company, the wholesomer the better. Rilke's *Jeder Engel ist schrecklich* is meaningless if one cannot recognize an angel's *Schrecklichkeit* when one sees a man go to bits under such treatment. And what with a demon throwing filth, and an angel, for all we know, snowballs with sharp stones inside, and Dowson in between! Dowson, whom alcohol and whores would have sufficed to undo!

It is a wonder that poetry can be written at all, because it is more or less out of such circumstance that true poems are born. It is even more surprising to think what lovely tunes Dowson could touch on his broken lute, considering that he was a selected target, a darling child, of more than a number of eerie tall dark daughters.

Not all his poetry belongs to him, still less of his prose, but he changed what he borrowed or what belonged to the age so passionately that it became his. Even the translations which he did for a living became pure gold under his touch. His love for words was

sincere and full of care. The true core in the body of this riotous dandy who died in the carnival month, the first, of the new century.

He really wanted love from no one. His shy pride was so strong—what a negative strength!—and so true to him that he preferred to die unaided rather than feel obliged or be a trouble to others. Yet, he threw his affection generously at the feet of whom he wished to adore. This generosity of feeling had to depend on his own discretion every time, for he did not wish others to become involved in his doubtful, hazardous journey, knowing well enough in whose ever-present company he had to travel.

Thus his symbolism was other than a poetic device. With him it was also necessary to cover his secretive shyness and awkwardness. He would sit down to his meal in the East End, waiting to be served. He could have used all the powers of a knight sitting in an ancient hall. The girl would come, and all he would probably feel was that she stood above him, upright, since he was sitting. He would accept that too, he would glorify himself at her feet, or rather, at her navel, and bow his head as in a ritual. Let her be queen, and he her servitor. He would be faithful to the ideal of her, he could no longer afford to give way an inch of ground to demon or angel, he had to hold his own kind and the loveliness there was in flesh, and the promise of resurrection there was in the body.

That was the final trap they laid for him. He threw roses far and wide. He covered such wide grounds as only great poets do, but he covered this ground thinly, a wide embroidering pattern, very bravely.

It is said he did not care for the ballet. Perhaps, being a dancer between the scorcerer and the angel, he loved the real thing too much. The time of movement was about to end in the stillness of the word. The white Carthusian friars lie down on the altar steps at midnight while their abbot reads the liturgy. Dowson knew that kind of love too, that child love that comes last to grown-up men when they have passed the stages of the intellect and the spiritual wilderness. This love also remained unfulfilled.

Stefan George, I believe, met Dowson. They exchanged letters and George translated some of Dowson's poems into his elaborate German. Words might have been spoken between them which could have shocked those demons away who tried to possess these two troubled men. New words. When such words are born, the angel rises again, and the demons flee.

FRED MARNAU

THE SENTIMENTAL EXISTENTIALIST

(To J. Slaphappy Foddinot)

If you are an Existentialist you must support communism, because you *must* support the only policy which makes people believe their future may be less hard than it is. For, if they, like you, know how hard it is, they will give in to despair. The truth is impossible to believe. But that everyone ought to have a fair share of the world's goods it is possible for everybody to believe.

Nothing is like the hand that smothers your face in the night. (It is your mother's hand.)

If you know the chaos within you, it is so horrible that you cannot any longer worry about the chaos in the world. If you know the chaos in the world, you despair; and so your own worries are cancelled out.

An old man is often happy with a young woman. It is because he stands a good chance of dying before he finds out the truth.

If you are a communist, you will hate Existentialism. It is because you know that all the good you wish for the world depends for its realization on the acceptance by all of your beliefs. If this is achieved there will be no war or famine or injustice. It is true. And it is an admirable idea. But it is impossible. Existentialism will incur your hatred because, by saying 'it is impossible', it is mocking all your endeavours: it may be true that it is impossible; but it shouldn't be admitted.

Marriage imprisons those who undertake it. But how far greater is the imprisonment of those who do not! Those who marry make their own prison, their own hatreds. Those who do not are forever conscious of the prisons about them, strangers' prisons, not their own, which are there inviting their entry wherever they look. They are surrounded by hatreds they have not themselves engendered.

It is better, even for an Existentialist, to suffer for one's own faults than for the faults of others. It would be better not to suffer at all. But, for an Existentialist, that is impossible. It is impossible for anyone. But an Existentialist cannot even believe it is possible.

Everyone is bound by morals. The only people who are not bound by morals are those who are naturally moral. To the Existentialist such people do not exist. They do exist, but they are too innocent to live. Since it is impracticable nowadays to massacre the innocents, and some of them tactlessly fail to make an end to their own lives, one measure remains. To ruin their innocence. The Existentialist is not a cruel man: he does not do this, but he sees that it is done. Even an Existentialist cannot help what he sees.

Most people want a little bit of everything. Some are content with few things. But it is no better. Those who want most, get most—but their disappointment is all the greater. It is no good having something when Nothing is there.

Women are always telling you to go to bed. First your mother, then your mistress, then your wife. It was a mistake ever to get up. But it would be a still greater mistake not to get up at all. Imagine the delight of being told 'Don't go to bed'. It is imaginary.

Of all the women who have, in one way or another, possessed you, your mother is the worst. She has clung to her possession longest and with least purpose. Remember she has never been interested in you. She has been interested in an idea she had long ago, which there was never the remotest possibility of your fulfilling. She knows that, but she still clings to the idea. It is an idea of happiness and fulfilment—not for you, but for herself through you. She knows from the start that it is hopeless, and as she grows older the outlines of the idea become blurred. She still clings to her possession, although she no longer has a reason for it, nor knows what her reason once was. The idea in her mind does not exist. It never did exist in any reality, but it was there, and powerful. It was Nothing. It is what has destroyed you.

We all try to escape our destruction. That is a mistake. For there is nothing from which to escape. It is from escaping Nothing that we encompass our destruction. The escape is the destruction. Nothing remains.

Nothing is greater than Love. You should remember that. Love is quite useless, and doomed. For Nothing always remains.

There are many precepts, often contradictory, from which people seek to profit. Often they are in the form of proverbs. But they are nearly always warnings after the event. Before it, they have no application. 'Many hands make light work', 'Too many cooks spoil the broth'. It is true, but it is quite unprofitable. Nothing will spoil the broth, nothing will make work light. If the broth is spoilt or the work is too heavy to bear, you will have to recognize the inconsolable fact that Nothing had made it so. The number of hands employed has nothing to do with it. It is between you and Nothing.

There is an old rhyme as follows:—

My Mother said I never should
Play with the gypsies in the wood.
The wood was dark; the grass was green;
In came Sally with a tambourine.
I crept to the sea—no ship to get across;

I paid ten shillings for a blind white horse.
I up on his back and was off in a crack,
Sally, tell my Mother I shall never come back.

We all want Sally and the tambourine, and we all go off on a blind white horse. It is a symbol of our desires and our hopelessly faulty methods of achieving them. Oh, yes, we do the best we can—but it is never as good as it should be. That is to be expected. What is so devastating to most people is that it never even approaches what it should be. And you will never go back! Your life, henceforth, is a journey on a blind white horse.

Nevertheless, I can say I love you, whoever you are. If you know who you are, you will know. But it will not profit you. For my love is Nothing. It is what destroys you. It is what destroys me. It means everything to me—I cannot deny it—but it is Nothing. And there is nothing one can do against Nothing. If one's destroyer had any existence, it would be an easy matter, but wherever one looks, one finds nothing. One is therefore perpetually struggling against nothing at all. I am devoted to you—and you, perhaps, to me—yet Nothing stands in the way. I am devoted, too, to my art, and you to yours. But there is still Nothing to destroy it. We are very good, we must admit that, but we have an enemy against which goodness is nothing. It is all nothing. Whatever is nice about it is due to nothing. And the final debâcle is equally pointless. Nothing will cause it. It will hurt, and it will not be necessary. It will be because nothing is there. Nothing is always there, even where there is something.

If you are an Existentialist there may be one consolation. It depends who you are. But Art is Nothing. You may still have Art.

NICHOLAS MOORE

POETRY AND LIVING: A QUESTIONNAIRE

How best can the relationship between life and poetry be expressed; or, in more specific terms, what type of existence is best suited to the poet? Wherein lies the secret of his words and his vision?

Speaking generally, we can say that the decade of the 'twenties sought to discover this philosopher's stone or sesame of expression through a study of æsthetics. The clue to good work, many artists then thought, depended on valid premises. Desirous of creating a thing of beauty, you must first determine what beauty was. So great

was the vogue for this philosophic ground-work that the young musician Peter Warlock—to give but one example—felt he must put aside work in his own medium in order to study Croce's 'Æsthetic' and get his first principles soundly established.

With the coming of the 'thirties the accent shifted from æsthetic to social and political matters, and the pre-conditioning determinant of good poetry now was thought to centre about 'the class-struggle'. Here, for example, is how Alec West—one of the less obtuse Marxist critics—epitomized the problem as he saw it: 'There is still, I think', he writes, 'a tendency greatly to exaggreate the peculiarity of the "artist". Whether a man writes, certainly depends in some way on the importance which the act of speech has for him. But whether he writes well, depends much more on his general social activity than on the degree to which the importance of the act of speech in his case surpasses the average. We have already said that the attitude to society developed by capitalism is unfavourable to literature, while that developed by socialism is favourable . . .' etc., etc.

Now generalizations about one's own times are even more precarious, in terms of the truth, than those with which we label the past. It does seem, however, that both these attitudes which characterized the art of the 'twenties and the 'thirties—these fallacies of first principles in poetry, whether social, political, or æsthetic—have largely ceased to exert an influence; and that with the romantic verse of the 'forties—an art of the imagination and the senses—the poet has inclined, subconsciously perhaps, to view his relationship to life in other than *a priori* terms. This sense of a new relationship may be partly suggested in the following manner. Writing of the 'metaphysical' poets, T. S. Eliot once described experience, as it presents itself to the modern writer, as a joint awareness of thoughts on Spinoza, tapping of a typewriter, cooking of greens, and a sensation of being in love. To-day, we can say, the poet tends to concentrate on these last three factors. Spinoza—or abstract presupposition—he is apt to rate just now below par. His approach to life and poetry we may therefore define as *experential*.

With such reflections as these in my head, I recently chanced to spend an evening with Charles Wrey Gardiner in a Thames-side pub. Out of our glasses and our talk there arose the idea of verifying our thoughts by presenting a questionnaire to poets in the pages of this magazine. As will be noticed, the questions offered imply an all-round relationship between the existence of the poet and the moment of composition. A poet, we feel, begins to write long before

he takes up his pen; and how his time is passed will have a powerful bearing on the final substance and mode of his expression.

Doubtless, other questions might be added to this list; but our intention has been to dwell on the every-day habits and actions which constitute the poet's life, rather than shape a set of questions whose relevance is mainly a matter for the study.

In conclusion, then, we should like to have the answers of various poets upon these points, with a view to publishing a selection of opinions such as we feel best represent our time.

Answers to the questions should be numbered with the number from the questionnaire, and should be from 100 words in length.

O, tell us, poet, what you do.—Rilke

1. What way of life do you think most conducive to the writing of poetry: the ascetic or the sensual?
2. Do you consider the married or the unmarried state most advantageous to composition?
3. Which do you think most favourable: the solitary or gregarious existence?
4. Do you think the poet's companions should be intellectual or ordinary-minded people?
5. Should the poet attempt to participate in the past-times of the masses; such as music-halls, boxing and football matches, billiards, darts, and four-ale bars?
6. Should he cultivate the tough's or the æsthete's attitude to life?
7. Should the poet be politically minded?
8. Which do you consider best for the poet: outdoor or sedentary occupation of leisure?
9. Which do you think the most favourable environment: that of the country or that of the town?
10. Do you think the study of other arts conducive to that of poetry?
11. Do you think that a secondary profession is compatible with the calling of poetry? If so, should this be connected with or divorced from the literary profession?
12. What level of income do you consider necessary to the exercise of non-commerical verse-writing?

DEREK STANFORD

The Poetry of the Brownings, Introduction by CLIFFORD BAX (Muller, 10s. 6d.); *Selected Poems of Tennyson*, Introduction by SIR J. SQUIRE (Macmillan, 7s.).

There are two main reasons for reissuing the works of distinguished poets and two main ways in which it can be done. Fundamentally, there is the ordinary necessity of making available books that are beginning to grow scarce, and, secondly, the feeling that certain recurrent periods of history are particularly apposite for the revaluation of individual poets—for they, either by similarity or great dissimilarity, point a specialised approach to the writing of poetry. So just as W. H. Auden's recent *Introduction to a Selection of Tennyson's Poems* was an example of the method whereby a contemporary poet finds a stimulation in examining through *completely fresh eyes* a poetry that is already part of the tradition in which he writes, so these two new selections and essays are examples of the simpler, popular approach which does not seek to revalue or analyse but simply to inform and present. Mr. Clifford Bax's anthology is produced in the manner in which poetry should always be produced—so that the physical appearance of the poem on the page is integral to its beauty, while Sir John Squire's Introduction is perhaps the more discerning of the two, and goes a long way to overcoming the 'school-book' appearance of his volume.

In practice it seems likely that both these selections were intended as first introductions to their respective poets, a fact which brings out a number of interesting points far more relatively important than the poetry itself, which is in either case beyond polemic and discussable validly only on a technical level to which neither of these books aspires.

For poetry is in essence a symbol of particular aspects of personal experience—love, sorrow, loneliness, nostalgia, conflicts, causes—that are directly related to the individual lives of the audience it reaches. That is a general truth which applies to most people who read poetry, especially in their most formative period. The poetry in itself—the poem as the solution of an artist confronted by perpetually changing technical problems, towards which he himself is always changing—is interesting only at a far later stage of development, when in fact either the reader has become a poet himself or can intuitively appreciate what the poem means in the mind of its poet, and so can criticize it in relation to its aim. But in the elementary stage the function of the poem is to touch off and

set vibrating an already experienced (whether actually or only imaginatively is of no consequence) series of emotions in the reader. In other words, its formal achievement is secondary to its ability to move. All of which relates back to the presentation of the poem in its private aspect, in its symbolization of an idealized emotion or a cause for action—its relation to the reader should be akin to the relation of, say, the rose symbol to Rilke's poetry. The poem in fact becomes a private touchstone, a corroboration of intimate feeling and a historical justification of individual beliefs.

At first then the poem is romantic to the point almost of being sacred. It is also particularly individual, something to be surrounded with the aura of a special personality—and when that sense of personality goes, the life in the poem goes too.

It is with regard to this that the presentation of poetry for either schools or adolescents does most harm—usually poems are lumped so close together in anthologies, one after another, each with nothing in common that they have no room to breathe and in the end suffocate each other. They mean nothing separately because they are not allowed to be isolated experiences, rare and distilled, which they are. A poem, just like any other work of art, needs a setting and room for the right sort of emotional experience to take place. For in its major impact poetry is emotional, and unless the surroundings of the poem contributes to the building up of a suitable effect, the necessary 'rapport' between poem and reader will not take place.

Neither of these books properly fulfils this function, for neither of them are physically interesting enough to make one feel that the books are conceived as works of art as well as what is inside them. To open them therefore means surmounting a barrier which should not exist. Striking examples of what can be done in this direction can be found in the illustrations for books of poems by Graham Sutherland and John Minton, as well as in nearly all contemporary French poem productions.

These considerations apart, both these new books are adequately selected. They are no more than that because as books they lack excitement. Neither attempts to be comprehensive, and their exact *raison d'être*—apart from providing professional anthologists scope to exercise their profession—is hard to determine. Sir John Squire's, at any rate, contains the best of Tennyson, while Mr. Clifford Bax includes the wonderful 'Porphyria's Lover' and gives rise to melancholy considerations about the decline of narrative poetry.

ALAN ROSS

ANTHOLOGY PIECE

Poetry of the English Speaking World, Edited by RICHARD ALDINGTON (Heinemann, 15s.); *Anthology of European Poetry* (Alan Wingate, 15s.); *Poems of Sleep and Dream*, chosen by CAROL STEWART (Frederic Muller, 10s. 6d.); *An Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry*, Edited by HOWARD SERGEANT (Harrap, 8s. 6d.).

Anthologies are popular with the public. They make it possible to glance at so many snippets, turn over so many leaves quickly, dip, browse, and finally go to sleep with the comfortable impression of having done a lot of reading. They can roughly be divided into three or four kinds of which each of these books is a good example. There is first the general anthology beginning with Beowulf and ending with Dylan Thomas, working through all the poets nobody wants to read. Such is *Poetry of the English Speaking World*, chosen and edited with an introduction by Richard Aldington. In sixteen pages of very small print he makes some controversial points such as that Skelton appears uncouth and old fashioned in comparison with Wyatt or Surrey. But it is Skelton who is read to-day and not Wyatt, and still less Surrey, polished though they be. But Mr. Aldington makes some intelligent points as well. 'An age of little poets will have little critics . . .' is one of them. And he emphasizes very rightly the complete valuelessness of contemporary judgments. The enormous popularity of 'smooth' Waller in the seventeenth, and Hayley in the eighteenth century, when Blake was an unknown lunatic, should make the readers of our current wise-cracking reviewers hesitate and wonder. Mr. Aldington admits to some anxious moments over the modern section. There is a heavy sprinkling of American poets rather oddly chosen, Ezra Pound being represented by two short poems only. Even the most rabid American will admit that Pound was the greatest single influence on modern American verse. But it is difficult to be 'general' when dealing with poetry after 1900, and perhaps it is ungrateful to complain if one closes this long tale of English poetry, our 'grand art', on Delmore Schwartz.

Alan Wingate have published the first volume of a very impressive series with the general heading *Anthology of European Poetry*, Succeeding books will deal with Spanish, Italian, and German poetry, and the whole should form a storehouse of the greatest body of work outside England that the world has ever known. English poetry has always been susceptible from generation to

generation to the best of European influences, and these volumes, where both the original and the translation appear on facing pages, should be invaluable. There is an introduction by Marcel Arland to this first one, which is dominated by such figures as Charles d'Orleans, Villon, Clément Marot, du Bellay, Ronsard, and contains two sonnets by Louise Labé and Marie Stuart's well-known 'Adieu à la France'. As regards production this book is beautiful and distinguished, and certainly worth keeping on one's shelves while waiting for the others to appear.

Poems of Sleep and Dream is an example of the 'personal choice' kind of anthology limited by a particular subject. Walter de la Mare has done this so well in *Behold This Dreamer* that we read Miss Carol Stewart's short and matter of fact introduction with a sense of some disappointment and recollection of De la Mare's magic prose. But there are many good poems in a book which some may find handier to carry about than Faber's ponderous tome. Skelton's masterpiece appears here with its wonderful line:

All drowsy dremyng, drownd in slepe.

Robert Colquhoun's appalling lithographs are the most unsuitable to the poems the publisher could possibly have chosen.

Lastly, there is *An Anthology of Contemporary Northern Poetry*, edited by Howard Sergeant. All the poems collected in this book are examples of the recent work of the poets represented who are there collected as being of northern origin rather than for the content of the poems which are various and do not show any difference to what is written in the southern part of the island, which to my mind invalidates the whole idea of the regional anthology. The case for the regional patriot, however, is well put in the introduction by Thomas Moult, and there is no doubt that the northern poet will be proud of the list of fifty-two contributors, which contains such names as Rayner Heppenstall, James Kirkup, Norman Nicholson, Kathleen Raine, Herbert Read, Francis Scarfe, A. S. J. Tessimond—hardly a discovery, Mr. Moult—R. C. Trevelyan, and Dorothy Wellesley. Anthologies are, I believe, one of the best ways of introducing contemporary poets, and much more exciting than the massive collections of the dead lying together in one grave, which is the impression the anthologizer of the past sometimes gives. Modern poets are better in small doses, and his best poems often appear better in company than alone.

WREY GARDINER

CANDLEGREASE

BERNARD GUTTERIDGE, *Traveller's Eye* (Routledge, 5s.); ANDREW YOUNG, *The Green Man* (Cape, 3s. 6d.); DONAGH MACDONAGH, *The Hungry Grass* (Faber, 7s. 6d.).

Mr. Bernard Gutteridge's traveller's eye is a jaded one. He writes with compression, but with little sympathy, of what he sees; the poems are purely descriptive, but all the landscapes have an intolerable sameness, and the language of the traveller is as jaded as his eye must be.

> *Death is our sorrow; and sorrow is life.*
> *The bodies cast like over-ripened fruit*
> *To burst beside the ford, the striking voices*
> *That print an emptiness,*

is a fair example of his flair for generalization, and his flat style. Messrs. Routledge have printed an emptiness all right. But there is one exception; 'The Blue Hare,' which is the first in the book, has the makings of a good poem. Even the language is a little less jaded, and, though the best has not been made of the materials, the elements that might have made a good poem are there.

> *. . . I know it suddenly, now.*
> *Scorn of my memories scolds me, my cold heart*
> *Is growing colder like the dead hare.*

Such writing is vivid enough, and in this poem the theme and imagery are telling, and there is some movement. Unfortunately it is more often the case that Mr. Gutteridge writes like a dead hare.

Mr. Andrew Young is a metaphysical nature-poet, if that is not a contradiction in terms. His eye is always wide awake and far from jaded, and his mind deals with what he sees in an equally lively fashion, and although his travels don't seem to take him out of his native country, I've no doubt his reputation will, which is more than can be said of Mr. Gutteridge. *The Green Man* is not a particularly good book of Mr. Young's, but in it there are some splendid things. He always writes economically, and, without straining for effect, brings off, at his best, the most perfect illuminations. The unexpectedness, yet perfect rightness, of his observations and conceits often leaves one gasping—with admiration needless to say. How admirable is the effect, for instance, of this, 'The Shepherd's Hut':

The smear of blue peat smoke
That staggered on the wind and broke,
The only sign of life,
Where was the shepherd's wife,
Who left those flapping clothes to dry,
Taking no thought for her family?
For, as they bellied out
And limbs took shape and waved about,
I thought, She little knows
That ghosts are trying on her children's clothes.'

There are three or four other poems in *The Green Man* which show perceptions as brilliant as that, and even the less striking poems are many of them quietly satisfying. What more could one ask? As for the production, *Traveller's Eye* is an ugly, *The Green Man* a pretty, little book.

Mr. MacDonagh is an accomplished poet in the tradition he follows, but it is perhaps a criticism that he is cautious not to step out of that tradition; that he is in fact at his best when he is nearest to Yeats or F. R. Higgins, and that one cannot avoid the comparison by which inevitably he suffers. For instance, in his poem, 'A Lament for F. R. Higgins,' which is very pleasing, he uses the cadences and stanzas that Higgins himself was fond of, and one immediately misses the subtle use of half-rhymes and assonances which gave Higgins' verse so distinct a tone. Similarly, many of his poems seem to echo Yeats' language, and even the images and the kinds of comparison he makes look like Yeats'; so that one seems to be reading a slightly less tough, a slightly less virile, a slightly less accomplished, a slightly less subtle, a slightly less inspired Yeats all the time. But, if one can manage to ignore so gross a debt, many of the poems are very enjoyable, and there are many beautiful lines and images. Particularly many of the short lyrical poems are very successful, though even these often have one line or so that sags slightly and weakens the total effect. But I don't mean to be unkind. Mr. MacDonagh *is* worth looking at twice.

NICHOLAS MOORE

KEITH DOUGLAS, *Alamein to Zem Zem* (PL, 8s. 6d.); STEPHEN COATES, *Second Poems* (PL, 7s. 6d.); ALAN ROSS, *The Derelict Day* (John Lehmann, 5s.); ROBIN ATTHILL, *If Pity Departs* (Dakers, 5s.); ALEXANDER REID, *Steps to a Viewpoint* (Dakers, 5s.).

In a letter to a friend,* the late Keith Douglas wrote: 'I don't know if you have come across the word Bullshit—it is an army word and signifies humbug and unnecessary detail. It symbolizes . . . the mass of irrelevancies, of "attitudes", "approaches", propaganda, ivory towers, etc., that stands between us and our problems and what we have to do about them. To write on the themes which have been concerning me lately in lyric or abstract forms would be immense bullshitting."

In these sentences Douglas offered a criterion by which to judge the value of his work as well as that of the four living writers of, I assume, similar age, who are mentioned above. But for applying the yard-stick of his irreplaceable noun Bullshit, it would be difficult to gauge the importance of the poetry turned out by what one may now call the war generation, for although the productions of those belonging to it, taken singly, are somewhat inconsiderable, their total effect is interesting. It would not be fair, in spite of the fact that a larger basis for doing so now exists, to compare these poets with their elders; it is on the basis of their common experiences and the way they manipulate them that they must be judged.

By that reckoning, Douglas easily surpassed the majority of his contemporaries in depth of feeling and range of imaginative reference. His easy pace, his apparently effortless way of fitting himself, his prose and his verse to his material, at first seem remarkable in a man of his age, as they did in Wilfred Owen; until one realizes that, like Owen, the experience of battle had made of him a man entirely in tune with whatever might befall him. He adopted to perfection the attitude under stress of the perceptive, insular man, taking what comes step by step without aforethought of fear and without external sign of anguish: 'I can't afford to wait because of military engagements which may be the end of me', he wrote. There were obviously no humbug and no irrelevancies in his manner towards his comrades and his enemies, and none are to be found in his work. (It is to be hoped that the production of his two volumes of poetry announced for publication will be more suitable to the contents than that of *Alemein to Zem Zem.*)

Mr. Coates writes of

*PL X.

. . . False pride,
Pride in the flat gramophone record, the
Steady purring and ticking of the regulated motor—

with impressive honesty. But his *position is on a quicksand,* and in order to extricate himself he uses desperate measures; and these, even if one sympathizes with him, especially since they relieve the diagrammatic monotony of his style—which is also his quicksand—could be described by Keith Douglas's noun or, more politely, as purple patches. The poetry of Mr. Coates is best when it most resembles a graph or a brief (*e.g.*, 'There was an empty place' and 'The fact of your existence'); the more personal his attitude, the more lushly sentimental his verse is apt to be. His book contains two longer works: 'The Redeemer', a not particularly subtle play which must be an unholy mess on the stage, but which has one passage of great beauty in the chorus of the blinding of Samson; and, secondly, a poem based on a novel from the Decameron, where Mr. Coates has succeeded entirely in what he has set out to do.

The Derelict Day is described by its publishers as the first book about the early phases of the Occupation to come from a poet (and active participant), rather than a journalist and student of affairs. As Mr. Ross *is* a poet this collection is free from humbug, but in his attempt to avoid reportage and analyses, irrelevancies have intruded on his poetic privacy. Thus, in a poem entitled 'The German Night', he has written very well:

Images of greatness rest over cedars:
the quiet cathedral yawns over
twilight, dusk-heavy with libraries.

The evening grows into leaning
streets, a sky and a time, where,
under cloud, the past and future meet.

The organ notes settle on water, sound
muffled on leaves, rotting with autumn:
boys' voices narrow music into a spire.

So the poem continues, quietly and gently. But it is completely spoiled, because Mr. Ross has used the hoary device of trailing strings of famous names across each stanza: Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Kleist-Wieland, Herder, Klopstock, Hegel. With George, Rilke, Toller, Wiechert we have come up to date, and the poem is promptly concluded.

Perhaps the example I have chosen, by its crassness, gives no indication of the valid ingredients of this book, of the intelligence

and taste of its author. One cannot, however, call it an unfair one, for it is not the only occasion on which Mr. Ross has used the easy way of what one might call virtuoso tactics to the detriment of his poem: 'The Failure' reads like an imitation of a well-known Auden sonnet; the refrains interposed in 'Lüneberg', 'Death in Winter', and elsewhere, destroy the organization of the poems; and at times his descriptions are over-ornamented by sentimental pictures.

Yet all of these are blemishes for which the restrictions Mr. Ross has imposed on himself, by publishing what he has written within a certain space of time on a set theme while it was still topical, are to blame. In the course of writing this book he may have disentangled himself from the technical equipment of the 'thirties poets, and absorbed the lessons which Trakl or lesser German Expressionists have had to teach him: in that case, his talent being so sure, he is not likely to regret the publication of his first volume, disappointing as it may seem now.

To Mr. Atthill's work the chosen yardstick cannot be applied so easily. When he writes:

Soldiers come home. I think of friends
for whom there's no returning;
who sat masked in armour of reticence
before me at schoolroom desks—

his position is fixed; he establishes himself as a more mature man than the poets mentioned above: he need not share with them their acute concern with reality or be as aggressive as they. In his most moving poem ('In Memoriam: Charles Spencer') he is sad to think how 'the cold printed word told me of your death'; he laments the pilot when, on the dark moor,

where the birches fluttered
their leaves wind-shaken—
I found the great body broken.

Or (in what is surely a borrowed symbol) he likens the space of years between the wars to 'The Unflowering Urn'. Wide though his compassion and sorrow may be, Mr. Atthill is at all times withdrawn to watch and observe: this position may lend dignity to his verse, but it also makes it passive and unexciting.

About Mr. Reid's book there can be little doubt. Having paid his tithe to one and all his elders, he plays in childish rhymes and dull metres with Caliban, 'A Zoo Seal', 'The Dead', and Edinburgh Castle alike, and succeeds in reducing everything to a nothingness of humbug and irrelevancy.

ERNST SIGLER

P. D. CUMMINS, *The Defeated* (Macmillan, 5s.); R. N. CURREY, *Indian Landscape* (Routledge, 5s.); ROY MCFADDEN, *The Heart's Townland* (Routledge, 5s.); RICHARD EBERHART, *Burr Oaks* (Chatto, 6s.).

P. D. Cummins, as the publishers claim, has an admirable sense of form, but that enlivening spark, of passion or uniqueness of phrase, which can transform verse into poetry, is rare in this book. The striking phrase which can illuminate a whole landscape or give character to a portrait, is also lacking in the descriptive poems of R. N. Currey. Too many of these poems, when not mere catalogues, are productive of monotony, though 'Hindu Temple' is an exception. This poet's conversational tones and exact notation of detail might serve him well in a light, satirical vein (see 'Childlike Men').

Although Ulster is colder than India, Roy McFadden identifies himself with a landscape in a manner that is most warming after the cold justice of Mr. Currey. No space, alas! to quote from the title poem, or from 'Autumn', 'Advice in Spring', or 'White Death', 'Green Spring'. As in his earlier work, McFadden is still preoccupied with death (and with the dead 'those faces lantern-strung through time') and with the failure of the living. His emotional, pessimistically philosophical temper is happiest when expressing with the lyricism of those who find their consolation therein, the moods of nature. 'Calendar', the most beautiful poem in this collection, is a fusion, complete in its identification, of the natural with the personal moods. It ends:

> *Cold snowdrops, sad white dancers, poised between*
> *Two seasons' tyranny, I recognize*
> *In this clear beauty's discipline of green*
> *And stark December white the distilled self,*
> *And pause in greeting as the winter dies,*
> *That I may stiffen into discipline*
> *And feel that pruned and certain self arise*
> *To carry frost into the heart of spring.*

Richard Eberhart has an intellectual energy, wedded to an accomplished technique, which surpasses the above poets; an economy of phrase, and a sustained intensity; a vision at once metaphysical and ironic. He can be as quiet and reflective as a willow by a mill stream, or as athletic, as unexpected, as vigorous, and as neat as an acrobat. Faults?—a tendency to make a play upon words or upon the similarity of sounds, which is not always

suitable in its context; and an occasional burst of speed where a slower pace is called for.

The book is in three parts, the first mainly lyrical, the last concerned with war. Most of the middle section is devoted to Triptych, a scintillating treatment of whimsicality, pointed with a wit as Elizabethan as the vocabulary used to express it; but profound. The lyrics are the best I remember to have read by this poet—'Rumination', 'The Magical', 'The Full Weakness of Man', 'Song', 'The Moment of Vision', 'I Will Not Dare to Ask One Question', and the delightful 'New Hampshire, February'. His attitude to death is less emotionalized than McFadden's:

I walked over the grave of Henry James
But recently, and one eye kept the dry stone.
The other leaned on boys at games away. . . .

I crushed a knob of earth between my fingers,
This is a very ordinary experience.
A name may be glorious but death is death,
I thought, and took a street-car back to Harvard Square.

MARK HOLLOWAY

FROM OTHER TONGUES

Translation: Second Series, edited by NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE and ELIZABETH KING (Phoenix Press, 10s. 6d. net).

This substantial volume, comprising over 130 poems from upwards of 100 poets in fifteen languages, had its origin in a mere handful of translations published in pamphlet form in 1945. So popular did the venture prove that a reprint was called for and caused widespread notice. As a result, over 5,000 translations were submitted to the editors and this is the selective result. The works chosen are largely from contemporaries or near-contemporaries in most European countries as well as Brazilian, Spanish-American, and Hebrew, not previously translated into English; but there are many poems also from earlier centuries, and a section of renderings from Classical Greece and Rome.

The chief questions in works of this kind are the aims and methods adopted by the translators and the ultimate value of the translations, first *vis-à-vis* the originals; and secondly, in their own right as new poems. Obviously, in an anthology by a great variety of translators methods and standards vary enormously, but certain touchstones of evaluation are implicit in the principles of selection adopted. The present editors tell us they—

'have looked not only for fidelity in their translations, but also for poetic ability and an understanding of the spirit of the poet, so that they may be assessed by the same standard as the original poems'.

To the last phrase of this pronouncement one may justifiably retort that it would prove fatal to nine-tenths of translations that have ever appeared! It is to presuppose an ability, a genius even, commensurate with the original poet, plus a flair as great as his for thinking in his language as well as in the translator's own: an extremely rare and exacting combination. But without assenting to the success of that austere aspiration in this volume, one can feel that the first parts of the pronouncement have been amply fulfilled: all the translations are in verse, and as far as the reviewer is able to judge from a limited knowledge of only three of the languages, attention has been given to conveying the spirit rather than the letter of the original; in the absence of such originals, they must be judged primarily as English poems. In certain cases, translations from well-known sources are included—from Sappho, Dante, Gœthe, Mallarmé, Baudelaire or Hölderlin—which should stimulate one to comparative criticism with other renderings; and in at least one case, the Horace 'Odes I: iv.' (*Solvitur acris hiems . . .*) a contemporary one by Louis MacNeice seems to have succeeded better than Lord Dunsany's in catching this flavour. But as a storehouse of contemporary English poetry, mirroring feeling in a dozen countries, this volume has considerable general significance; and a few of the poems are outstanding. John Heath-Stubbs's natural medieval cast of thought and diction well fits him to render felicitously Dante's 'Canzone V'; Roy and Mary Campbell's intimate experience of Spain gives to their 'Somnambulistic Ballad' of Lorca some of its original freshness and exactitude of observation; and Honor Arundel's two sonnets from Louise Labé show clear affinity of temperament; while Allan M. Laing's rendering of 'The Coral Reef' well conveys the feeling of tropical heat that is so distinguishing a feature of Heredia's verse, and which is difficult to parallel in English outside Flecker. In other cases, as *e.g.* Vernon Watkins' translations from Hölderlin, Heine and Rilke, the poet writes in a style and limpidity of diction that one associates with his English poetry, and one acknowledges his wisdom in choosing to translate poets whose verse has affinity with his own. His 'Love Song' from Rilke is a good example.

But so much verse here the majority of English readers will be unable so to assess, and among it the most ambitious as, *e.g.*, the

terza rima rendering by Norman Cameron and Jiři Mucha of Vitézlav Nizval's long 'Historical Picture'—the story of disintegrating Czecho-slovakian life after Munich; or the poems in the Russian section, where most of Babette Deutsch's versions strike the reader as being as happy as her opening of Fedor Tyutchev's 'Twilight':

The pigeon-coloured shadows mingle,
All sound is sleeping, colour fades;
Life melts in distant resonances,
And motion drowns as dusk invades. . . .
Unseen a moth's wing beating faintly
On the nocturnal air flits by. . . .
Hour of unutterable longing!
I am in all, the all is I;

and where Alexander Block's 'Danse Macabre' is given its appropriate shudder by R. M. Hewitt.

A keen critical eye is given to the production of this Anthology. Considered even as original English poetry, little that is vague or slipshod has got past the editorial eye, and the whole is distinguished by those two qualities too seldom found together: versatility of style and interest and excellence of technique.

HERMANN PESCHMANN

LAURENCE BINYON, *The Madness of Merlin* (Macmillan, 6s.); MAURICE CARPENTER, *The Tall Interpreter* (Meridian Books, 2s. 6d.); RANDALL SWINGLER, *The Years of Anger* (Meridian Books, 2s. 6d.).

Each of the three writers under review has a different philosophy and a different approach to his subject, each says something different in his own way. That, at least, is refreshing and, as most reviewers will agree, is not so rare as might be thought.

Of the three, one, Laurence Binyon, is dead. His reputation was established among the poets of the generation preceding that to which I belong, and I should say, first of all, that what I have read of his previous work leaves me quite untouched—probably because of this disparity in age and outlook.

The Madness of Merlin is the first part of a long dramatic poem based upon the legend of Merlin according to Geoffrey of Monmouth and other Welsh sources. It tells of the period of madness during which Merlin lived in the forest and planned the prophecies

which made his name so well known in the medieval world. Although I find the epic as a whole rather artificial and outmoded in form I think it contains some lines of a memorable force and appeal, as, for example, the soliloquy of Merlin as he enters the forest for the first time to follow:

Voice, that I heard crying
Amid the spears and the shouting,
And suddenly all my strength was annulled,
And my arm dropt helpless
And nothing was as it had seemed before,
Changed in the opening and shutting of an eye?
Did'st thou not show me all flesh as my flesh
Did'st thou not show me the world's wound,
Did'st thou not accuse me?

But if I, and my contemporaries, attribute our lack of response to this epic in the grand manner to the decline of the use of the long poem as a medium, then we must read *The Tall Interpreter*. In an epilogue Maurice Carpenter says of his poem that 'it is an attempt to break through the tyranny of the little lyric, and to show that poetry can enter once again the spaces filled by "The Færie Queen" and "Paradise Lost". Not that I would claim greatness, but would make claim for a poetry that is not afraid to be big.' Later he says (and this is where he differs in approach from Laurence Binyon) 'the poem is not simply an attempt to retell the story of Eurydice, as the Greeks knew. We must acknowledge the difference in the two societies. The poem creates its own mythology.'

Into the poem the poet has introduced images of science and of the whole vista of modern life. It is an ambitious work, planned to run into five books, and a very considerable and successful one judged by this first book in which Maurice Carpenter displays his command of a strongly original style and a forceful imagery.

The Years of Anger is a collection of Randall Swingler's poems over the last ten years. They are the poems of a Communist and those written before the war have a clear-cut realization and apprehension of the threatening danger, of the fear and later the agony of Europe. It nearly all the poems there is a kind of jagged, tortured appeal of sincerity which makes me wonder how Mayakovsky would have written of the war. Both *The Years of Anger* and *The Tall Interpreter* belong to the Garrick Poets series of which I hope we shall see many more in the future.

ROLAND GANT

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